

Presidential National Historic Landmark Gets a New Roof

As the 2012 Presidential election approaches, the DHPA and the Grouseland Foundation recently completed the rehabilitation of the historic home of the ninth U.S. President, William Henry Harrison. In 1800, the area now known as Indiana was part of the Northwest Territory to which Harrison was appointed as the territorial governor and based in the capital at Vincennes. His home, Grouseland, was completed in 1804 and served as both a residence and for official government functions as well. Harrison was elected President of the United States in 1840, although his term was the shortest in American history, lasting only 30 days.



A historical marker provides background on the territory's history and Harrison.

Grouseland's two story, masonry construction was built in the Georgian architectural style. Almost all of the materials used to build the house were from local resources, the limestone foundation was from a quarry near Fort Knox and the bricks were handmade and fired nearby. The mansion has 26 rooms, 13 fireplaces, a basement, and an attic. Known as the "White House of the West," Grouseland overlooks the Wabash River and once encompassed 300 acres. In addition to its architectural significance, several treaties with Native Americans were signed in Harrison's Council Chamber.

In the mid-19th century, the house was sold by Harrison's granddaughter, and was used as a hotel and later to store grain and house animals. It became a residence again in the 1860s, but by the time the Francis Vigo Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution acquired it in 1909, Grouseland had undergone alterations and additions, and was in dire need of repair. The Chapter took over the house to save it from demolition and restored it and opened it to the public as a museum. Grouseland was dedicated as a National Historic Landmark in 1960.

Various renovations to the house have occurred since the 1930s, and maintenance of the historic features of the building are a constant need and priority. As standards for restoration and rehabilitation have developed, activities at Grouseland have aimed at greater accuracy and best practices to insure the integrity of the projects.



Grouseland prior to the 2011-2012 Historic Preservation Grant project.

The DHPA has funded two rehabilitation projects at Grouseland in the last 12 years. A Wabash River Heritage Corridor Fund project in 2000 assisted with masonry rehabilitation of the house and reconstructed shutters for the windows. The Grouseland Foundation then applied to the federal Historic Preservation Fund program in 2011 for a grant to replace the roof. This scalloped cedar shingle roof was 35 years old and was coming to the end of its life expectancy. Water infiltration was occurring through the dormer window sashes and the chimneys, damaging valuable block-print wallpaper, masonry, and interior wall structures including plaster and original hand-hewn lath. The condition of the roof was endangering irreplaceable furniture, architectural features, and artifacts, not to mention the structural integrity of the house itself.

The DHPA awarded a matching grant to remove and replace the roof; however, the staff of Grouseland had determined that the scalloped shingles were not what was originally on the house, and were an anachronistic feature added during one of the many renovation efforts. Therefore, the project proposed installing square shingles to return the house closer to its original appearance. The scalloped shingles were removed and the roof decking was inspected and repaired as needed. Ice shields and flashings were installed as well as new copper pan gutters, scuppers, and downspouts. Traditional wood square-butt shingles were installed to return the property closer to its original appearance.



The photo on the left shows the scalloped shingles. The photo on the right was taken after the square-butt shingles and copper downspouts were installed.

Foundation matched the \$50,000 HPF grant with \$50,000, and overmatched with an additional \$5,300 to complete the work. As a result of the investment of federal funds, the DHPA will hold a protective covenant on the property until 2021 and will review and approve any alterations or activities to insure they meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties.



New copper pan gutters, scuppers, and downspouts were installed (below) to replace the deteriorated ones (left).



Grouseland is open to the public every day March-December from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and every day except Mondays January-February from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Directions, holiday closings, admission prices and group reservations, and ways to support Grouseland can be found online at www.grouselandfoundation.org.



The NHL property following the \$115,393 project.